

Rep. Nadler Joins with Colleagues to Celebrate 60th Anniversary of Israel

Monday, 21 April 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-08) today entered into the Congressional Record the following statement regarding the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the bipartisan House Leadership Resolution, H. Con. Res. 322, of which I am a cosponsor, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel.

“In 1947, the year I was born, the area now known as Israel was about to go through a birth of its own. In 1948, with the founding of the only Jewish state to ever exist since the Roman destruction of the ancient temple in 70 C.E., Jews found that their new homeland was filled with sand and little water, but it was also filled with great hope and resolve. Following the murder of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, this small country would soon become a homeland for another 6 million Jews, free to practice Judaism, but still targeted for their faith.

“While Israel was formed, Jews all over the Middle East were facing a crisis of their own; Jewish refugees in Arab lands were expelled systematically, under an official regime policy which included anti-Jewish decrees, pogroms, murders and hangings, anti-Semitic incitement and ethnic cleansing. The Arab League's 1947 decree provided a formula for state-sanctioned discriminatory measures, replicated in many Arab countries, in a deliberate campaign to expel the Jewish refugees from their home countries. Unlike the Palestinians, the Jewish refugees were absorbed into their new host countries, mostly by Israel. About 600,000 stayed in Israel and the remaining 300,000 fled to other countries, such as France, Canada, Italy, and the United States. In Israel today, the Jewish refugees from Arab countries and their children comprise the majority of the Jewish population.

“This House recently adopted my resolution, H. Res. 185, urging that the rights of Jewish refugees be recognized in any future comprehensive Middle East settlement. We are continually working to ensure that any Middle East peace agreement is just – fully just – to all parties.

“This is a continual process. From its first day, Israel has fought for its right to exist when it was attacked by its Arab neighbors. Since then, continuous wars have been waged, all aiming to destroy the Jewish state and its people. At times, mothers and fathers have had to buy gas masks for their children; young children have had to celebrate their birthdays in bomb shelters. Despite this, families have shared laughter on the beaches of the Mediterranean; young couples have danced on the rooftops of Jerusalem. That all of these times have been simultaneous is a testament to the strength and determination for not only the State of Israel, but for humanity.

“Following their independence, Israel's people, driven to immigrate for fear of persecution and for their ideological dreams, struggled with basic life, rationing food and living in makeshift shelters. The early immigrants began building the land, irrigating, planting, and educating their children. Working in the sun, Israel's wrinkles began to

show the stress, but the outcome can be seen today; flowers and olive trees on the hillsides and universities at full capacity. In cooperation with the United States and other countries, innovations by Israelis in science, energy, agriculture, technology, and medicine have been felt around the world.

“Today, the country is flowing with milk and honey, as a nation of immigrants and a home for the persecuted. But it is also facing much hardship. Like the United States, Israel was founded by immigrants escaping persecution and wanting to live in peace. But while Israel remains a sanctuary for Judaism, it remains a dangerous place to be a Jew.

“In its 60th year, Israel faces some of its greatest challenges and needs its allies and friends more than ever. The Middle East is still a very dangerous place, and scapegoating Israel is still a very convenient means of holding power for some very dangerous autocrats. Such tactics are deplorable, and we must do everything we can to stop them.

“While some Arab states have been working with us to respond to Iran’s vicious lies and rhetoric, we must also continue to demand that Israel, our democratic ally, be recognized by these very states. And we must call for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers kidnapped and held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah, which is called for by H. Res. 107, a bill I cosponsored.

“Indeed, Israel is now at a critical crossroads. We hope for the best, but we remain mindful that peace cannot be achieved unless sincere and substantive acts are forthcoming from the Palestinians. Terror must come to an end, as must incitement. At middle age, and I speak of personal experience, as I am also marking my 60th year, one must take stock of their past and look forward to the future. The Israeli State and its people continue to work to preserve its foundation as a Jewish state with Jewish values, while they live in a region where the very idea of the existence of a Jewish state continues to be challenged. As Israel looks toward the future, integrating its immigrants, expanding its economy, preserving its heritage, and providing foreign assistance and refuge to Jews throughout the world, the United States will stand alongside her in her quest for peace and prosperity.

“We hope to learn from each other; Israel continues to fight terror alongside the United States and stands as an example of how to balance civil liberties and security, religious freedom and the expression of religious values in its economic and political structure. Like the United States, the Jewish democratic State has a robust freedom of press that serves to teach the public and government how to better itself, and an independent judiciary which seeks to preserve the liberties for which it has fought.

“The relationship the United States has with Israel is special; we have more in common than we do apart, and we continue to work in cooperation to achieve the broader goals of a peaceful future for our children and grandchildren. As we grow together as democratic nations facing challenging times, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution acknowledging the special bonds of friendship the United States shares with our only democratic ally in the Middle East, Israel.

“I thank our leadership for sponsoring this resolution and I strongly urge its passage.”